



# Gallbladder Surgery Post-Op Instructions

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## Pain and Discomfort

- It is normal to have pain after your operation. How much pain you experience depends more on the individual than on the operation itself.
- Pain normally occurs in the abdomen, especially the right side and right flank. In addition, shoulder pain often occurs for 24 to 48 hours because of the gas used to expand your abdomen during surgery.
- You will be given a prescription for a narcotic pain medication. You can take one or two tablets every four hours. Call the office immediately if you experience itching or a rash and stop the medication. If you don't like the drowsy feeling these medications cause or you no longer need as much pain medicine, you can try ibuprofen (motrin or advil).
- If your pain is not controlled by the medication you have been given, call the office. It is helpful to take some type of pain medicine (narcotic or over the counter) before getting out of bed and before going to sleep the first few days after surgery.
- If you are taking the narcotic pain medication regularly, make sure to also take a stool softener such as Colace or Metamucil, as the narcotics tend to cause constipation.

## Incisional Care

- Your incisions may be covered with skin glue, tiny strips called steri-strips, or in rare occasions staples and Band-Aids or gauze dressings.
- It is not uncommon to have some mild bleeding from the incisions during the first 24 hours after surgery. Do not become alarmed; simply change the Band-Aids or bandages as needed.

- You can remove the Band-Aids or gauze dressings 24 hours after surgery. **DO NOT REMOVE THE STERI-STRIPS OR THE SKIN GLUE.**
- You may also take a shower 24 hours after surgery. It is OK to get the steri-strips or skin glue wet. Be sure to gently dry your incisions and replace the Band-Aids or bandages.
- It is common for patients to notice some black and blue or maroon discoloration around the incision. This represents a small amount of blood and is normal. It should not alarm you. It is also common for this to only become apparent 2-3 days after surgery as blood in the tissues moves to the surface.
- If your incision becomes red, hot and tender, you may have an infection. In that case call the office. You have been given antibiotics in the operating room prior to surgery, and unless discussed with you, you do not need them after surgery.

## Diet

- You can eat a regular diet including fatty foods without any restrictions after surgery. This of course will be limited by other illnesses you may have such as diabetes, heart disease and hypertension.
- Nausea and vomiting from anesthesia is not uncommon for the first 24 hours after surgery. If you feel nauseous, take clear liquids only. Call the office if the nausea and vomiting persists for greater than 36 hours. Do not take any alcoholic drinks for at least 24 hours and while you are taking narcotic pain killers such as Vicodin (hydrocodone)
- You may experience some diarrhea following the surgery. This is normal and will resolve with time.

## Activity

- You can do whatever you are comfortable doing once you are discharged. You cannot cause any serious damage by your activities after your surgery.
- Nonetheless, use common sense, don't over exert yourself and don't lift more than 10 pounds for the first 2 weeks after your surgery.

- You will most likely not want to do much for 24 to 48 hours after surgery. Although you should get rest during this time, it is equally important to get up and walk.
- Do not drive while you are taking narcotic pain medicines or if you experience pain at your incision sites while driving.
- You can return to work when you feel comfortable, and when you can perform your job safely and at the level you and your employer expect. Usually this is a minimum of one week. If your job involves heavy lifting you should stay out of work for 2-4 weeks. Do not return to exercise or strenuous activity until you are seen in follow-up.

## **Follow-Up**

Call the office after you get home to make arrangements for a follow-up appointment. Unless you or your family were instructed otherwise, this should be in 7-10 days.

## **Call the Office if You Experience:**

- Significant bleeding
- Difficulty breathing
- Chills and/or fever greater than 101° F
- Pus or infection at the incisions
- Yellowing of the eyeballs or skin
- Severe pain
- Any worrisome condition

Please remember that we are always available to take care of you and answer your questions. Do not view your calls as an inconvenience or bother to us. We want to help make your post operative period as easy as possible.